



**Parent Guide
to
Personal Safety
for Children**



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A Message for Parents

Children are Virginia's most precious resource, but as children, they often lack the skills to protect themselves. It is our responsibility, as parents and teachers, to safeguard children and to teach them the skills to be safe. This Guide is designed to help you talk to your children about how to protect themselves from threats to their safety.

The Guide provides you with:

- ◆ tips on discussing safety issues with your child;
- ◆ strategies for what you can do to help your child stay safe;
- ◆ what your child can do to help stay safe;
- ◆ what to do in an emergency; and,
- ◆ additional resources for parents.

We know that we can protect children by teaching them to be smart, strong and safe. As parents, you can:

- ◆ teach your children about safety and protection measures;
- ◆ take an active interest in your children and listen to them;
- ◆ teach your children that they can be assertive in order to protect themselves; and,
- ◆ most importantly, make your home a place of trust and support that fulfills your child's needs.

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Materials for this Guide have been derived from the following sources:

Personal Safety for Children: A Guide for Parents, (2002) a publication from the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Know the Rules (2001-02) brochures from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Raising Streetwise Kids, (1997-2002) crime prevention information from the National Crime Prevention Council.

"Tips for Parents." (2002) I-Safe America

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For additional information about KIDsafe Virginia:

Call the Governor's Office for
Substance Abuse Prevention (GOSAP)

804-786-9072 or

Email: gosap@gov.state.va.us

<http://www.gosap.state.va.us/kidsafeva.htm/>

You and Your Child's Safety

Q. Who should talk with my child about personal safety?

- A. You. A parent is the best person to teach a child about personal safety.

Q. What should I say?

- A. Focus on effective personal safety skills including:

- ◆ Smart Thinking;
- ◆ Strong Character; and,
- ◆ Sticking Together.

Q. When is the best time to talk with my child?

- A. Begin talking with your child now. Then, continue the discussion as your child grows. Take into account your child's age and ability to comprehend and to practice safety skills. Look for "teachable moments" when circumstances create opportunities for learning. Many strategies you can use are contained in this Guide.

Q. How do I get started?

- A. **LISTEN** to your children.
- ◆ Know your children's daily activities and habits.
 - ◆ Listen to what they like and what they don't like.
 - ◆ Encourage open communication. Let your children know they can talk to you about any situation.
 - ◆ Reassure your children that their safety is your #1 concern.

A. Get **INVOLVED**.

- ◆ Know where your children are at all times.
- ◆ Your children should check in with you if there is a change in plans.
- ◆ There is no substitute for your attention and supervision.

A. **TEACH** your children.

- ◆ Set boundaries about places they may go, people they may see, and things they may do.
- ◆ Reinforce the importance of the “buddy system.”
- ◆ It’s OK to say NO - tell your children to trust their instincts.

A. **PRACTICE** safety skills with your child.

- ◆ Rehearse safety skills, so that they become second nature.

Tips for Parents

Start with the Basics

- ◆ Make sure your child knows his full name, address and phone number.
- ◆ Be sure your child knows how to call 9-1-1 or “0” in emergencies, and how to use a public phone. Practice making emergency calls with a make-believe phone.
- ◆ Tell your children never to accept rides or gifts from anyone they don’t know.
- ◆ Teach children to go to the uniformed security guard, police officer or store clerk (with nametag) if ever they get lost in a store or a crowd.
- ◆ Set a good example by your own actions - lock doors and windows and see who is there before opening the door.
- ◆ Take time to listen carefully to your child’s fears and feelings about people or places that scare them or make them feel uneasy. Tell them to trust their instincts, and to tell you if anything makes them feel uneasy.

At Home Alone

- ◆ Leave a phone number where you can be reached. Post it by the phone, along with emergency numbers and the number of a trusted friend.
- ◆ Have your child check in with you or a neighbor when he/she gets home. Agree on ground rules for having friends over and going to a friend’s house when no adult is home.
- ◆ Make sure your child knows how to use the window and door locks.
- ◆ Tell your child not to let anyone into the home without your permission, and never to let a caller at the door or on the phone know there is no adult home. Kids can always

say their parents are not available, and that they will be glad to take a message.

- ◆ Work out an escape plan in case of fire or other emergencies. Rehearse with your children.

At School and Play

- ◆ Encourage your children to walk and play with friends, not alone. Tell them to avoid places that could be dangerous - vacant buildings, alleys, playgrounds or parks with broken equipment and litter.
- ◆ Make sure your children take the safest routes to and from school, stores and the homes of friends. Walk the routes together and point out places they could go for help.
- ◆ Visit your children's bus stop, and make sure your young children know their bus number. Teach them to stay with a group while waiting for the bus. Teach your child to get away from anyone who bothers him/her and to tell a trusted adult. Caution your child about any adult who approaches him/her asking for help or directions; grown-ups needing help should ask adults — not children — for assistance.
- ◆ Encourage your children to always be alert in the neighborhood, and to tell an adult - you, a teacher, a neighbor, a police officer - about anything they see that doesn't seem quite right.
- ◆ Teach your children to NEVER hitchhike or accept a ride from someone unless you have told them it is okay in advance.
- ◆ Teach your child to settle arguments with words, not fists, and to walk away when others are arguing. Remind them that taunting and teasing can hurt friends and make enemies.
- ◆ Check out the school's policies on absent children. Are parents always called when a child is absent?

In Public Places

Shopping

- ◆ Make visits to the mall opportunities for your children to practice safe shopping skills. Teach them how to use a public telephone; locate adult sources of help. For older children, show them how to go to the restroom with a friend.
- ◆ Teach children always to check first with you, or the another person in charge, before they go anywhere within the store or mall.
- ◆ Always supervise your children and always accompany young children to the restroom. Make certain your child knows to stay with you at all times, and to always check first with you or with the person in charge before they go anywhere.
- ◆ Teach younger children to look for people who can help them if they become separated from you. Tell them to look for uniformed security officers, or law enforcement officers, or a store clerk with a nametag. If older children become separated from you while shopping, have them meet you at a predesignated spot, such as a checkout counter in a store or an information booth in a mall. Teach children to NEVER leave the store/mall or go to the parking lot to look for you or your car.
- ◆ DO NOT leave children alone at public facilities, such as video arcades, movie theaters, playgrounds or toy stores.
- ◆ If you allow your older children to go to the mall or attend activities without you, make sure they take a friend. It's both safer and more fun. Older children should check in with you on a regular basis while they are out. Make certain a clear plan is in place to keep them updated on such things as where and what time you will expect them, and what they should do in case of a change in plans.

Amusement or Theme Parks

(Many of these guidelines apply also to other large gatherings, such as concerts and sporting events.)

- ◆ Get information about the park prior to your trip and review the park guidelines, particularly those regarding lost children. Discuss the information as a family, including what to do if you become separated. Ask your children what they would do in certain situations, and practice appropriate actions and responses with your children.
- ◆ Get a map of the park immediately upon arriving, identify the “Help/Information Centers” throughout, and reinforce the idea that these are the places for children to go in case they become separated in the park. Making a plan beforehand of what to do should greatly speed a reunion.
- ◆ Talk to your children about who can help them if they become lost, need assistance or find themselves in trouble. Examples of these people may be park personnel with nametags or mothers with children. Children should never go off alone with anyone.
- ◆ Do NOT allow your children to wear clothing or carry items on which their names are displayed. If a child’s name is visible, it may put him/her on a “first name” basis with a potential abductor.
- ◆ Make sure that your children carry some form of identification and family/emergency contact information with them in case they become separated from you or need assistance.
- ◆ A child wearing brightly colored clothing can be more easily spotted in the park.
- ◆ Accompany young children on rides in the park. Older children should stay in groups and take a friend with them wherever they go in the park. If you decide to let young children go on rides without you, wait with them in line, watch them enter the ride, and immediately meet them when they exit the ride.
- ◆ Always accompany younger children to restrooms in the park. Older children should not go to the restroom alone.

- ◆ Immediately report any suspicious or inappropriate behavior to authorities.
- ◆ Make certain that your children have coins to use the public telephone. If you have a cellular telephone or pager, make certain your children know those numbers and ensure that these devices are activated so your children may call you if they become lost. Consider using two-way radios while in the park so that family members can stay in touch with each other.
- ◆ Immediately report your children as being missing if you become separated in the park, and be prepared to give an accurate and detailed description of your children. You should carry a current photograph and be able to accurately describe what clothing they are wearing.
- ◆ If you are considering granting permission for your child to take part in a field trip to an amusement or theme park, make certain there is going to be qualified supervision of the children by responsible adults.

Others in Your Child's Life

As your children grow, they are likely to come into contact with more and more people — baby-sitters, day care and after-school program staff, sports and youth-serving organizations. There are some steps you can take to help keep your child safe. Listed below are some helpful publications available from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, online at <http://www.missingkids.com/> or call 1-800-THE-LOST.

- ◆ *Just in Case . . . Parental Guidelines in Case You Need A Baby-sitter*
- ◆ *Just in Case . . . Parental Guidelines in Case You Are Considering Day Care*
- ◆ *Know the Rules . . . for Child Safety in Youth Sports*

Protecting Your Child Against Sexual Abuse

- ◆ Always know where your children are and whom they are with. Let your children know that they can tell you anything and that you'll be supportive.
- ◆ Teach your children that no one - not even a close relative or teacher - has the right to touch them in a way that feels uncomfortable, and that it's okay to say "no," get away, and tell a trusted adult.
- ◆ Don't force kids to kiss, hug or sit on a grown-up's lap if they don't want to. This gives them control and teaches them that they have the right to refuse.
- ◆ Teach your children that they have the right to say NO to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touch or actions by others. Teach them to tell you immediately if this happens. Reassure them that you are there to help and that it is okay to tell you anything.
- ◆ Be sensitive to any changes in a child's behavior or attitude. Encourage open communication and learn how to be an active listener. Look and listen to small cues and clues that something may be troubling your children, because children are not always comfortable disclosing disturbing events or feelings. This may be because they are concerned about your reaction. If your child confides in you about a problem, strive to remain calm and nonjudgmental. Listen compassionately to the concern and work together to get the help needed to resolve the problem.
- ◆ If your child has been abused, report it immediately to police, or to child protective services. In Virginia, contact the Virginia Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-552-7096.

Rules for Younger Kids

I **KNOW** my name, address, telephone number and my parents' names.

I always **CHECK FIRST** with my parents or the person in charge. I tell them before I go anywhere or get into a car, even with someone I know.

I always **CHECK FIRST** with my parents or a trusted adult before I accept anything from anyone, even from someone I know.

I always **TAKE A FRIEND** with me when I go places or play outside.

I **SAY NO** if someone tries to touch me or treat me in a way that makes me feel scared, uncomfortable or confused.

It 's OK to SAY "NO," and I **KNOW** that there will always be someone who can help me.

I **KNOW** that I can **TELL** my parents or a trusted adult if I feel scared, uncomfortable or confused.

I am **STRONG**, I am **SMART**, and I have the ability to be **SAFE**.

Internet Safety Tips for Parents

Source: Adapted from I-SAFE America *"Tips for Parents."*
Additional information available from <http://www.isafe.org/>.

- ◆ Keep the computer in an open area — not in your child's bedroom. It is much more difficult for a child to go online and view a risky Internet site, or email/chat about questionable content when adults or other family members can see the computer screen.
- ◆ Spend time with your children on-line. Let them show you their favorite web sites and activities. If you are Internet "literate," share your favorite sites and teach your child that there is more to the web than chat and message boards.
- ◆ Chat rooms are great fun, but a chat room is often the initial point of contact with a predator. Talk with your child about who they meet in chat rooms. Ask about the acronyms used in chat rooms. (Example: LOL means lots of laughs.)
- ◆ Review your computer files often. The accessed Internet web site addresses are stored on the hard drive. When you see a questionable address, check it out yourself.
- ◆ Respect your child's privacy regarding emails, but ask for a list of all the aliases (user names) used by his/her friends. Ask about any "new" names that appear in the "in" or "sent" basket in your email program.

Personal Safety Resources

National Crime Prevention Council

<http://www.ncpc.org>

Phone: (202) 466-6272

The McGruff web site (<http://www.mcgruff.org/>) features:

1. Coloring books/activities and comics; word games and mazes
2. Tips for kids on the following topics:
 - ◆ Helping Out
 - ◆ Stranger Danger
 - ◆ Bullies
 - ◆ Back to school
 - ◆ Using the Web
 - ◆ Getting Along
3. Tips for adults on the following topics:
 - ◆ Helping Kids Help Out
 - ◆ Keeping Children Safe From Strangers
 - ◆ Choosing a Safe Camp for Your Child
 - ◆ Talking With Children About Recent Events
 - ◆ Cybersafe Kids
 - ◆ At Home Alone
 - ◆ Back-to-School Safety
 - ◆ Raising Streetwise Kids
 - ◆ Bullies
 - ◆ Cultural Diversity
 - ◆ Managing Conflict
 - ◆ Media Literacy
 - ◆ Guns and Other Weapons
 - ◆ Bicycle Safety
 - ◆ Drugs and Alcohol

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

<http://www.ncmec.org/>
1-800-THE-LOST

NCMEC maintains a library of resources, many of which can be downloaded free of charge from the web site. General topics include the following:

- ◆ Child Abduction
- ◆ Child Sexual Exploitation
- ◆ Child Safety Information
- ◆ General Information
- ◆ Internet Safety

Child Safety Information is available on the following topics:

- ◆ Child Safety on the Information Highway
- ◆ Door-to-Door Solicitation Safety Tips
- ◆ How to Keep Your Child Safe: A Message to Every Parent
- ◆ Knowing My Eight Rules for Safety, a safety tips poster for children.
- ◆ New Neighborhood Safety Tips
- ◆ Safety Tips for Expectant Parents
- ◆ Summer Safety Tips for Children
- ◆ Summer Safety Tips for Parents
- ◆ Tips to Help Prevent the Abduction and Sexual Exploitation of Your Children

The *Know the Rules...Series* features safety messages for children and teens on the following topics:

- ◆ After School Safety Tips for Children who are Home Alone
- ◆ Child Safety in Amusement or Theme Parks
- ◆ Child Safety in Youth Sports
- ◆ General Parental Tips to Help Keep Your Children Safer
- ◆ School Safety Tips
- ◆ Going To and From School More Safely
- ◆ An Interactive Theatre Project
- ◆ Abduction and Kidnapping Prevention Tips for Parents
- ◆ Safety Tips for Halloween
- ◆ Safety Tips for Holidays and Safe Shopping
- ◆ When Your Child is Flying Unaccompanied
- ◆ When Your Child is Traveling Unaccompanied by Bus or Train

The *Just In Case...Series* features information for parents and other adults on the following topics:

- ◆ Selecting a baby-sitter
- ◆ Choosing day care
- ◆ Exploitation warning signs and steps to take
- ◆ Preventing parental kidnapping
- ◆ Finding professional help for children who have been kidnapped or sexually exploited
- ◆ Grieving
- ◆ Steps to prepare in case your child might someday be missing
- ◆ Steps to take in case your child might someday run away
- ◆ Helping children prepare for testifying in court

Key National Resources

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Charles B. Wang International Children's Building

699 Prince St.

Alexandria, VA 22314-3175

PHONE: (703) 274-3900

(800) 843-5678

FAX: (703) 274-2200

<http://www.missingkids.com>

National Crime Prevention Council

1000 Connecticut Ave., NW, 13th Floor

Washington, DC 20036

PHONE: (202) 466-6272

FAX: (202) 296-1356

<http://www.ncpc.org>

I-Safe America

5963 La Place Court

Suite # 104

Carlsbad, CA 92008

PHONE: (760) 754-5600

<http://www.isafe.org>

Key Virginia Resources

Governor's Office for Substance Abuse Prevention

202 North Ninth Street, 6th Floor

Richmond, Virginia 23219

PHONE: (804) 786-9072

FAX (804) 786-1807

<http://www.gosap.state.va.us>

Virginia Center for School Safety

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

805 East Broad Street

Richmond, Virginia 23219

PHONE: (804) 371-6506

<http://www.virginiashoolsafety.com>

Virginia Department of Education

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Program

PO Box 2120

Richmond, VA 23218-2120

PHONE: (804) 225-2871

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/>

<http://www.safeanddrugfreeva.org>

Virginia Department of Fire Programs

101 N. 14th Street, 18th Floor

Richmond, VA 23219-3684

PHONE: (804) 371-0220

<http://www.vdftp.state.va.us>

Virginia State Police

PO Box 27472

Richmond, VA 23261-7472

PHONE: (804) 674-2000 24-Hours

<http://www.vsp.state.va.us>

KIDsafe Virginia Resources

Parent Guide to Personal Safety for Children

This Guide will help parents talk with their children about safety measures to protect themselves against harmful situations, including abduction and exploitation.

Parent Guide to Crime Prevention for Teens

Designed to provide parents with essential information to help teens avoid being victimized, this Guide includes the latest prevention strategies and tips on how to talk to teens.

Personal Safety Lessons

For students, in kindergarten through 4th grade, lessons will raise awareness and develop skills to help children stay safe. Designed to be taught by law enforcement professionals, the lessons are developmentally appropriate, use interactive learning and are keyed to Virginia's Standards of Learning.

Internet Safety Lessons

Students in grades 5 through 8 will learn how to safely and responsibly take control of their Internet experience. The program will enable students to recognize and avoid dangerous, destructive or unlawful online behavior and to respond appropriately. Parent-oriented Internet safety awareness sessions are a component of the program.

Crime Prevention Lessons

Lessons on crime prevention for high school students will be offered to school resource officers as part of their law-related education activities. Lessons focus on teen issues, involve interactive learning and are keyed to Virginia's Standards of Learning.

Fire Safety Lessons

Lessons for students focus on three fire safety themes: smoke alarms, escape routes, and home hazards. Lessons may be taught by classroom teachers or fire safety professionals and are aligned with Virginia's Standards of Learning. Lessons are available online at the Virginia Department of Fire Program's Web site: <http://www.vdfp.state.va.us/>.

KIDsafe Virginia Identification Kits

By partnering with automobile dealerships across the Commonwealth, free child DNA kits will be available to parents who will voluntarily gather their child's DNA for use in the event the child is missing. Parents will maintain custody of the DNA to help investigators if the need arises.

YADAPP - A Youth Leadership Development Program

Regional training opportunities to develop youth leadership skills will be provided for teams of high school students who will develop action plans to keep their schools and communities safe and secure. This mentoring opportunity will support leadership development and promote successful student action plans. This training is modeled after Virginia's highly successful Youth Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Project (YADAPP) that has developed youth leaders for nearly 20 years. To learn more about YADAPP, visit <http://www.yadapp.com/>.

Virginia School Safety Toolkit

Available to K-12 school administrators and public safety professionals, the Toolkit contains a wealth of information on school crisis and emergency management, juvenile law, drug detection and prevention. Many of the resources showcased within the Toolkit were developed in Virginia through the Department of Education and the Virginia Center for School Safety. The Toolkit will support the collaborative work of educators and public safety professionals in order to help ensure the safety of Virginia's youth.

Make-the-Call Hotline

Using a toll-free hotline, students can anonymously report conditions that they believe could potentially threaten the safety and security of their schools and communities.

1-866-SAFE VA 1
(1-866-723-3821)

KIDsafe Virginia Mailbox

Students, parents, educators, public safety professionals and all other citizens of the Commonwealth may use this online "suggestion box" to recommend strategies for enhancing the safety and security of youth in schools and communities throughout Virginia.

www.vasafeschools.com

For additional information about KIDsafe Virginia:
Call the Governor's Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (GOSAP) 804-786-9072 or Email: gosap@gov.state.va.us
<http://www.gosap.state.va.us/kidsafeva.htm/>.

Parent Feedback



Dear Parents:

We would like to hear from you! Please take a moment and let us know what you think of the KIDsafe Virginia Parent Guide to Personal Safety for Children.

1. Did you find information in the Parent Guide helpful?
(please circle one)

Very helpful

A little helpful

Not helpful

2. What information was most helpful to you?

3. What improvements would you recommend for a future Parent Guide?

4. Other comments about the Parent Guide:

Please mail to the Governor's Office for Substance Abuse
Prevention:
202 North Ninth Street, Sixth Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219

or Fax: 804-786-1807 Email: gosap@gov.state.va.us

Notes:



*"One goal of my administration
is to ensure a safe and drug-free
Virginia for all citizens of the
Commonwealth, but
especially for our children."*

Governor Mark R. Warner



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A KIDsafe Virginia Sponsor